

October 7, 2005

## NATIONAL FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

BISMARCK – “Candles, as pretty as they may be, are a growing cause of home fires – and home fire deaths”, warns Ray Lambert, State Fire Marshal. As National Fire Prevention Week begins Sunday, October 9, 2005, Lambert wants to focus community attention on fire prevention, safety, and awareness in the home.

The Fire Marshal’s office, a division of the Attorney General’s office, joins the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) each year to focus attention on fire prevention. This year’s theme is **“Use Candles with Care: When you go out, blow out.”**

Lambert hopes to raise awareness of key fire safety issues, especially at home. “Remember that a candle is an open flame, and open flames can easily ignite nearby materials, spreading fire throughout your home in a matter of minutes,” said Lambert. “Fire is fast – that’s why every home should have a working smoke alarm and a planned and practiced exit plan.”

In 2004, 4% of home fires in North Dakota were started by candles, causing property loss of approximately \$170,000. Preliminary information for 2005 shows 5 home fires attributed to unattended candles.

Fortunately, there are many things people can do to make their homes safer. Following this year’s theme of candle safety, Lambert offered these tips:

- Always stay in the room where candles are being burned. Blow out all candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Keep candles away from items that can catch fire, like clothing, books and curtains.
- Use candle holders that are sturdy, won’t tip over easily, are made from a material that cannot burn, and are large enough to collect dripping wax.
- Keep candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids.
- Keep candle wicks trimmed to one-quarter inch and extinguish taper and pillar candles when they get to within two inches of the holder. Votives and containers should be extinguished before the last half-inch of wax starts to melt.
- Never put candles in windows or near doorways where drafts could bring flammable materials in contact with the open flame.
- Keep candles at least one foot from bedding, curtains and blinds, wallpaper, upholstered furniture and other combustible materials. Don’t allow children or teens to burn candles in their bedrooms.

As home fires across the state caused over \$8.75 million damage in 2004, Lambert also urges North Dakota residents to ensure that smoke alarms are installed on every level of the home and kept working with monthly testing and annual battery replacement. Smoke alarms should be replaced after 10 years. Each member of the household needs to know the fire escape plan, and should practice it twice a year.